

LESSON 2

3100
B.C.

2000
B.C.

1500
B.C.

1000
B.C.

LAND OF THE PHARAOHS

READ ALOUD

About 3100 B.C. two mighty kings met in battle. One king wore a white crown and ruled over a long stretch of the Nile River in Upper Egypt. The other king had a red crown and controlled a large area in Lower Egypt. The outcome of the battle was of enormous importance. Whoever won it would control the biggest kingdom in the world.

THE BIG PICTURE

You have already read that farming towns began appearing in different parts of the world during the New Stone Age. Some towns grew into small cities, as people specialized and developed trade with neighboring towns.

These communities created rules to promote peace and fairness among neighbors. Village leaders were usually in charge of creating these rules and making sure that the rules were followed. As the communities grew larger, their governments changed to meet their many new needs.

Along the Nile River in Egypt, groups of villages joined together under the leadership of kings. These larger communities developed complex systems of government. Soon the people of the Nile River valley would see even greater changes in the way their communities were run.

Focus Activity

READ TO LEARN

What role did the pharaohs play in ancient Egypt?

VOCABULARY

unification
pharaoh
economy
hieroglyphics
scribe
papyrus

PEOPLE

Menes
Khufu

PLACES

Memphis
Thebes

UNIOI

Along the Egypt's vi were learn surplus cr were usin tools, pott think this have gues crowded between t

Egyptian

In the were also walls arou of bloody there wer To better belonging banded to doms. Tov a king wh n Lower wore a re Then, a forces lec

UNION OF TWO CROWNS

Along the Nile River 5,000 years ago, Egypt's villages were thriving. Farmers were learning how to produce more surplus crops. Craftworkers in villages were using new technology to make tools, pottery, and jewelry. How do you think this affected trade? As you may have guessed, the Nile River became crowded with boats as trade increased between towns.

Egyptians Join Together

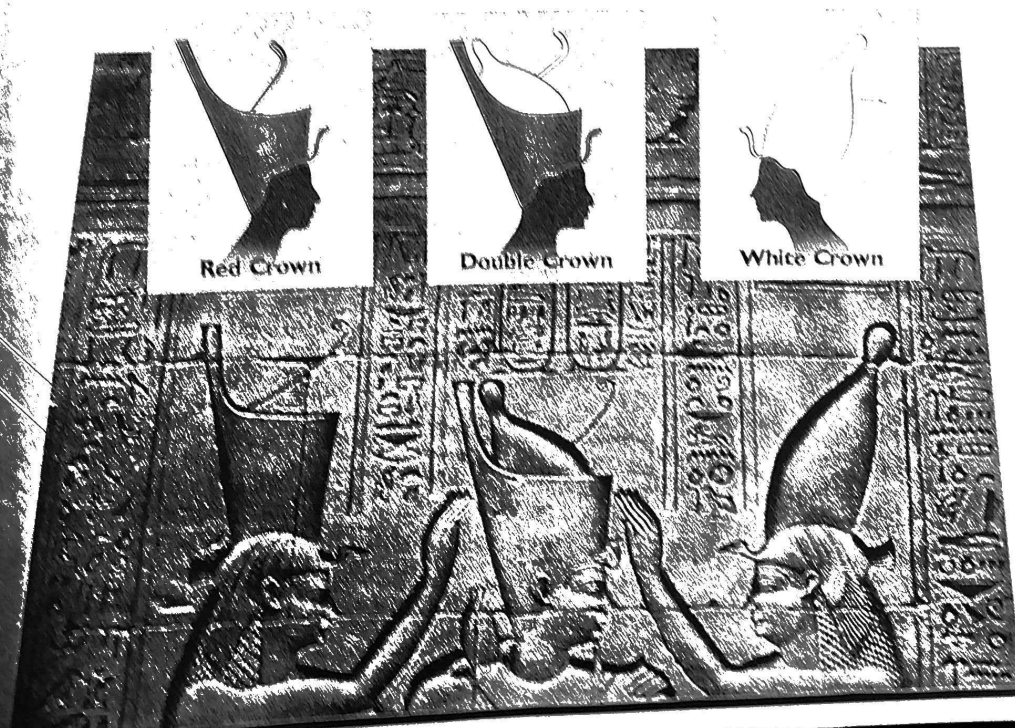
In the midst of all this activity, there were also terror and fear. Ruins of walls around early towns and paintings of bloody battle scenes suggest that there were many wars between villages. To better protect themselves and their belongings, the people along the Nile banded together into two separate kingdoms. Towns in Upper Egypt supported a king who wore a white crown. Towns in Lower Egypt followed a king who wore a red crown.

Then, about 3100 B.C., this changed. Forces led by Menes (MEE nees), the

king of Upper Egypt, swept north into the Nile Delta. Menes's army overthrew the king of Lower Egypt. To show his victory, Menes wore a double crown. It combined his white crown with the red crown of Lower Egypt. This change stood for the unification of Egypt. Unification is the joining of separate parts into one.

Following this unification of the two kingdoms, Menes became the first pharaoh (FAY roh) of Egypt. The word *pharaoh* actually refers to the "great palace" in which the rulers lived. Later it became the name given to all the rulers of Egypt. The time when Egypt's early pharaohs worked to build unity within the country is called the Old Kingdom. It lasted from about 2686 B.C. until 2181 B.C. Two other major periods in ancient Egypt's history, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom, would follow.

These Egyptian carvings show rulers and the crowns they wore. The middle crown represents a unification of the other two.



LIFE IN THE OLD KINGDOM

At first, Egypt's pharaohs did not greatly change the civilization that they ruled. They mainly added to the practices of local government, trade, and religion that had existed for hundreds of years along the Nile.

In time, though, the pharaoh became the center of the civilization. His or her actions shaped the fate of all Egypt.

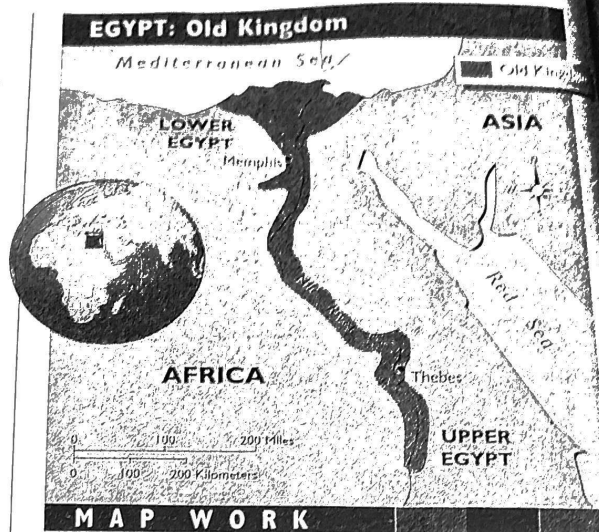
Government Under the Pharaohs

After unification, the most powerful local leaders in Egypt were made area governors for the new government. They performed some of the same services as your local leaders. They were in charge of collecting taxes in their areas and served as local judges. They had different duties as well. Ancient Egyptian governors made sure that precious flood waters were shared fairly among farmers through the use of canals and storage pools.

The area governors reported to the pharaoh's headquarters in Memphis, Egypt's capital city. Memphis was located between Upper and Lower Egypt, near present-day Cairo. From the palace in Memphis, the pharaoh decided how Egypt's affairs should be run, from the highest to the lowest levels.

Religion in Egypt

The pharaoh had great political power in Egypt. He or she had great religious powers as well. In fact, Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was a child of their sun god Ra (RAH). Just as Egyptians believed that Ra gave life to Earth, so they believed that the pharaoh gave life to Egypt and its people. Just as Ra deserved to be worshiped, so, too, did the pharaoh.



Egypt's Old Kingdom pharaohs ruled from Memphis, in Lower Egypt.

1. Why might Lower Egypt, near the Nile Delta, be a good place for a rich capital city?
2. Suppose you lived in Upper Egypt and were invited to Memphis. Would you travel with the flow of the Nile, or against it?

Ra was the most important of the many gods whom ancient Egyptians worshiped. Egyptians believed different gods had different roles. For example, one god caused the flooding of the Nile. Another gave potters and metalworkers their creativity. Other gods took the form of snakes or crocodiles. The god Isis protected people from sickness and harm. Her husband Osiris represented the dead who awaited rebirth.

Osiris was important because belief in the afterlife was central to the religion of Egypt. Egyptians believed that after a person died, he or she would go on to the "Next World." Egyptians believed that the dead could take food and objects into the "Next World." Thus, food and belongings were buried with the dead.

Ancient bodies called mummies were put into the

Egypt

Since a god, him or her center my of manag produc Egy culture of food How v main v pharac part of crops (taxes. eggs, r and oli then us

Mummies in cloth z with mas put in co and scen were pair tomb wa

Ancient Egyptians preserved the bodies of dead royalty with a process called *mummification*. The bodies were dried and wrapped in strips of cloth. Sometimes pets such as cats were also mummified to accompany their owners into the afterlife.

Egypt's Economy

Since the pharaoh was considered a god, all things in Egypt belonged to him or her. This put the pharaoh at the center of Egypt's economy. The economy of a country is the way its people manage money and resources for the production of goods and services.

Egypt's economy was based on agriculture. Farmers produced a surplus of food, which fed the whole country. How was that surplus divided? The main way was through taxes. The pharaoh collected a large part of every farmer's crops each year as taxes. The grain, eggs, meat, fruits, and olive oil were then used to feed

the pharaoh's family and servants. The goods were also used to pay for any other items the pharaoh wanted.

The pharaoh also took taxes on everything else made in Egypt, such as leather goods, linen cloth, and baskets. The pharaoh even taxed people's time. During flood season, for example, Egyptians from priests to potters to farmers were called upon to build canals or buildings for the government.

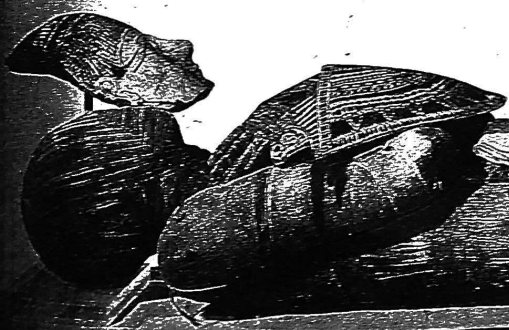
Egypt's craftworkers and artists depended on the pharaohs for their jobs. These people spent most of their time working to keep Egypt's many temples supplied. For example, temples needed golden bowls and stone statues.

Since the pharaoh owned all of Egypt's temples, it was the government's job to pay for all the supplies they used. No money changed hands, since money did not exist in Egypt at that time. Rather, goods of equal value were traded. For their efforts, craftworkers received clothes and food.

Mummies were wrapped in cloth and covered with masks before being put in coffins. Portraits and scenes of daily life were painted on the tomb walls.



The Ganga Collection



A SYSTEM OF WRITING

How was it possible for the pharaoh's government to keep track of all of its business details? How could it make sure, for example, that a farmer in Upper Egypt was paying taxes or that a temple in the Delta had enough linen?

The pharaoh's local governors helped by communicating with the pharaoh's government in Memphis. What made this communication possible was a system of writing.

Ancient Egyptians developed a system of writing sometime before unification. This system, called **hieroglyphics** (hi roh GLIF ix), was made up of about 800 picture-signs. These individual picture-signs, or symbols, were called **hieroglyphs**. Hieroglyphs could stand for objects, such as bread, or for sounds, such as *s*. Hieroglyphics are the reason why we now know so much about the lives of ancient Egyptians.

The Life of a Scribe

Pharaohs depended on written records to keep their government in order. A number of writers called **scribes** traveled throughout Egypt to keep records of details great and small. They went out into the fields with local leaders to record how much grain farmers harvested. Scribes also determined how much farmers owed to the government. Scribes drafted letters and marriage contracts for townspeople. Because writing was taught to only a few, scribes were highly respected in Egyptian culture. It was a great honor to become a scribe.

Only boys could become scribes, and they began training when they were about 10 years old. Each day in school

they chanted passages aloud to improve their reading skills. Then they spent hours writing out lessons and



This statue shows Imhotep, a doctor who later was worshiped as the god of medicine. The hieroglyphics are from a king's tomb.

stories over and over. If their attention wandered, they ran the risk of being beaten. Junior scribes used broken pottery as their "scrap paper."

Writing on Paper

After the boys mastered a simple type of hieroglyphics used for record keeping, they graduated to writing on papyrus (puh PĪ rus). Papyrus is a reed plant that grows along the Nile. Ancient Egyptians used these reeds to make a kind of paper, also called papyrus. Papyrus paper was not very different from the paper we use today. Did you notice how similar the words *papyrus* and *paper* are? Our modern word comes from the ancient one!

Scribes used sharpened reeds as pens. They dipped the reeds into small disks of red or black ink. Then the scribes carefully wrote the information they needed to record on their rolls of papyrus paper.

Scribes had to have good penmanship. They also needed to be good at math. After all, they had to keep correct records of the pharaoh's many goods. Scribes also figured out the number of workers and the amount of materials needed to complete building projects.

The Key to a Lost Language

By about A.D. 400, hieroglyphics fell out of use and their meaning was lost. The ancient symbols found on Egyptian tombs and walls were a mystery to people who came upon them many centuries later.

In 1799 a French soldier was digging in the Nile Delta town of Rosetta. There, he found a large, black stone with writing on it. This stone was later called the Rosetta Stone, after the place where it was found. It contained a pas-

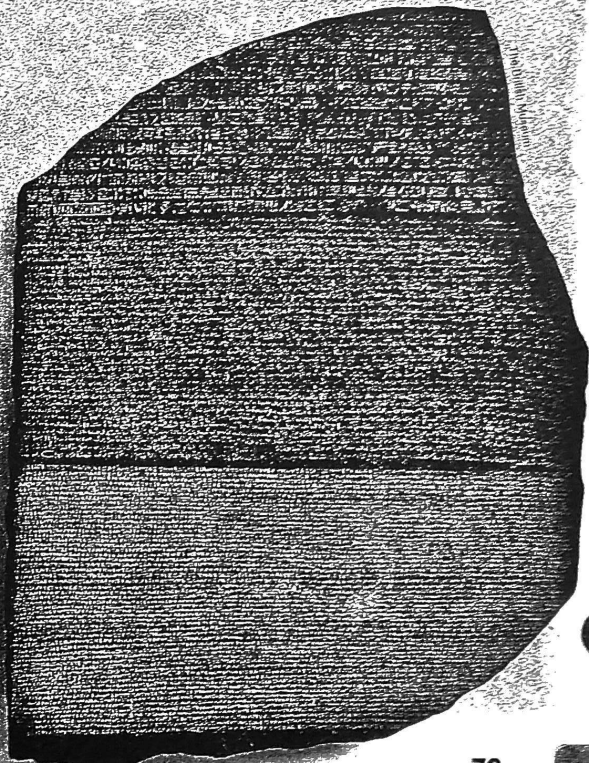
sage written three times, in hieroglyphics, Greek, and another type of Egyptian writing called *demotic*. By comparing the three languages, a French scholar named Jean François Champollion (shahm pohl YON) worked to solve the mystery of hieroglyphics. By 1822 he had succeeded. Look at the photograph of the Rosetta Stone. How has its writing helped historians?

MANY VOICES PRIMARY SOURCE

The Rosetta Stone
196 B.C.

Champollion recognized the symbols for Ptolemy (TAH luh mee), a later Egyptian pharaoh. His name is shown here in its hieroglyph symbols. The Rosetta Stone records many of Ptolemy's deeds. For example, the pharaoh lowered taxes, rebuilt certain temples, and freed prisoners!

The stone has the same message in three languages: (from the top) hieroglyphics, late Egyptian (demotic), and Greek.



BUILDING THE PYRAMIDS

No project could have been more challenging to scribes than keeping track of the building of the pyramids. These huge stone structures were built as tombs, or burial places, for pharaohs.

The Great Pyramid is the Old Kingdom's most spectacular monument. It is by far the biggest of all pyramids built in Egypt's history. Pharaoh Khufu (KOO foo) ordered construction to begin about 2600 B.C. This mountain of stone was to be his tomb. It would bring glory not only to himself but to all of Egypt. He would be buried inside with many belongings that he would take into the afterlife.

The 20-year project involved as many as 100,000 people and took a huge amount of Egypt's resources. Few families escaped the call to work at the site. Large amounts of Egyptian taxes went to feed and clothe the project's workers. Even the Nile River landscape changed. Entire cliffs of stone were cut into blocks to make up the pharaoh's great stone monument! Look at the diagram on page 80 to see the construction of the Great Pyramid.

WHY IT MATTERS

Khufu was not the only pharaoh who demanded such massive building projects. Other rulers during the Old Kingdom called for similar, if smaller, monuments. The huge projects took their toll on Egypt's economy and people. Anger against the pharaohs probably began to grow.

Egypt's hard-won unity started breaking down. Local governments began resisting the orders of the pharaohs. In about 2000 B.C., leaders in Upper Egypt revolted and eventually set

up a new pharaoh. They based their new capital in the southern town of Thebes. With this division of the country, the Old Kingdom came to an end.

The breakdown of the Old Kingdom, however, led to the rise of an even greater civilization in ancient Egypt. The next lesson tells how the pharaohs learned from their mistakes. They stopped building pyramids. Instead, they built the richest and most powerful civilization the world had ever known.

Reviewing Facts and Ideas

SUM IT UP

- Menes united the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt to form the largest government in the world at that time.
- The pharaoh was central to Egypt's government, economy, and religion.
- The writing system of Egypt, called *hieroglyphics*, provided a way for government workers to communicate over long distances.
- Ordinary people worked to build huge government building projects like the Great Pyramid. This strained both Egypt's economy and its people.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. How did local governors help the pharaoh to rule all of Egypt?
2. Why was Memphis a good place to build Egypt's capital city?
3. **FOCUS** How did the pharaohs' government affect the lives of Egyptians?
4. **THINKING SKILL** What *effects* did hieroglyphic writing have on Egypt? Explain why these were effects.
5. **WRITE** Create your own hieroglyph symbols that represent objects or sounds. See if a partner can read your message.